State-Society Relations and Citizenship in Situations of Conflict and Fragility
About this supplement

Statebuilding and peacebuilding, while conceptually distinct, are becoming more closely integrated in academic and policy circles. This supplement is one of two supplements that explore this development:

- **Statebuilding and Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility** looks at the links (and tensions) between statebuilding and peacebuilding, how these activities interact, and how they can be approached in practice.

- **State-Society Relations and Citizenship in Situations of Conflict and Fragility** looks at concepts of state-society relations, civic trust, citizenship and socio-political cohesion in relation to statebuilding and peacebuilding.

The publications highlight key issues and debates for each topic covered and identify relevant references. They are to be read in conjunction with the GSDRC’s [Conflict](https://gsdrc.org/conflict) and [Fragile States](https://gsdrc.org/fragile-states) Topic Guides, in particular the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding chapters. Links to relevant sections from these and other chapters of the guides are highlighted throughout.

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About the GSDRC

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) provides cutting edge knowledge services on demand and online. It aims to help reduce poverty by informing policy and practice in relation to governance, conflict and social development. The GSDRC is primarily funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). [www.gsdrc.org](http://www.gsdrc.org)

Published: October 2010
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Introduction

The impact of violent conflict and fragility on a country’s society, economy and political governance is devastating and encompassing. The effects can be tangible and visible, including killed and injured civilians; destroyed or derelict infrastructure; and poor and inadequate public service facilities. They can also be intangible, such as lack of confidence and distrust in government; weak social cohesion and the destruction of norms and values; pervasive sense of fear, disempowerment and insecurity; and pessimism about the future. Addressing both types of effects is essential in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Statebuilding and peacebuilding processes have often focused primarily, however, on the tangible aspects – demobilising soldiers; improving and restoring physical infrastructure, buildings and institutions; drafting laws and constitutions; and providing technical assistance and training (Pouligny, 2010).

Until very recently, efforts undertaken by the international community to promote statebuilding have focused on the state, resulting in a top-down approach centred on formal institutions. Those working in peacebuilding, on the other hand, have often advocated a bottom-up civil society approach. Increasingly, however, statebuilding and peacebuilding concepts and strategies have evolved in ways that have brought them closer together. Establishing strong public institutions is now considered essential in the promotion of peace; and developing institutions that are responsive to the demands of citizens and inclusive processes that treat members of society as active agents are considered important to statebuilding. The concept of state-society relations and efforts to foster positive, mutually constructive relations has thus received greater attention. The OECD DAC has emphasised the importance of looking beyond the mere forms of institutions in statebuilding processes to state-society relations, state legitimacy and the political and social fabric of society.

This supplement focuses on these crucial intangible aspects of statebuilding and peacebuilding: promoting positive state-society and intra-society relations; restoring or generating trust in government and public institutions and trust among citizens; and fostering notions of citizenship and socio-political cohesion. Left unaddressed, statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts are unlikely to succeed.

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3903
Crucial social and cultural elements underpin state institutions and ensure that they function. This is especially important to understand in ‘fragile’ settings. This paper argues that conventional perspectives need to be broadened beyond tangible dimensions of state resilience, institutions and statebuilding to include intangible dimensions. International actors need to gain an understanding of the relationships, structures and belief systems that underpin institutions, and of the multiplicity and diversity of political institutions, cultures, and logics through which statebuilding processes may be supported.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3878
What are the views of civil society organisations (CSOs) on statebuilding and peacebuilding? This report presents the findings of a consultation designed to input into the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (Timor-Leste, April 2010). CSOs argue that the way that peacebuilding and statebuilding processes are undertaken is critically important: there is a need to focus not only on what is done, but how things are done. Inclusive and participatory processes are essential in order to address conflict and to ensure that statebuilding and peacebuilding can be complementary.

Access full text: available online
State-Society Relations

State-society relations is defined by DFID as ‘interactions between state institutions and societal groups to negotiate how public authority is exercised and how it can be influenced by people. They are focused on issues such as defining the mutual rights and obligations of state and society, negotiating how public resources should be allocated and establishing different modes of representation and accountability’ (DFID, 2010, p. 15).

The focus is not on particular institutional forms but rather on the relations and relational functions of state and society institutions. Neither the state nor civil society is seen as acting in isolation. Rather, the state derives its legitimacy through its interaction with citizens and an organised and active civil society. The Citizenship Development Research Centre views a citizen as ‘someone with rights, aspirations and responsibilities to others in the community and to the state. This implies a relationship among citizens, and between the state and all those living within its borders’ (Benequista, 2010, p. 4). Citizenship confers various benefits, including the right to enjoy a nationality; to vote, hold office and participate in political processes; to access education, health and other goods; to access the labour market beyond the informal sector; to own businesses, land and other forms of property; and to security of residence and freedom of movement.

The nature of the political settlement can greatly impact upon state-society relations. In many fragile and conflict-affected states, relations are based on patronage and lack of accountability. The prominence of informal institutions and relationships and unofficial processes result in divergences between formal systems and rules and actual practice. Political elites, who benefit from patronage and income from natural resource rents and criminal activities, often have little incentive to engage with citizens and to build effective public authority. The concentration of power in a few elites also limits the participation of citizens from public life. In some situations, citizens may be excluded from public life through state repression and violence. This results in a legacy of negative and weak state-society relations. Efforts to promote an inclusive political settlement can re-shape relations and contribute to political and social transformation.

Much of the focus in statebuilding has been on building the capacity of central state institutions. Attention must also be paid to supporting civil society and citizen engagement such that they can hold the state accountable and make it responsive to society. Where donor policy and funding has been directed at both state and civil society institutions, these interventions have often been compartmentalised based on a traditional state-civil society divide. Strategies and policies are needed that focus on the interaction between institutions and citizens.

Attention also needs to be paid to altering elite incentives. External actors will find it difficult though to directly influence internal political dynamics. It may thus be more effective to target international behaviour and initiatives that affect incentives, such as management of extractive industries, international tax evasion and corruption.

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1 The use of the term ‘citizen’ instead of ‘the poor’ gives more emphasis to the relationship to government and to others persons and groups in society.
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3863
How does citizen engagement contribute to responsive governance? This paper summarises ten years of research from the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability, presenting the key findings of more than 150 case studies of citizen engagement. It argues that existing donor programmes fail to recognise the full potential of citizen engagement, resulting in lack of understanding of the complex relationship between citizens and the state that shapes governance outcomes. Citizens need greater political knowledge and awareness of rights and of agency as a first step to claiming rights and acting for themselves. Involvement in associations has been an effective way of strengthening notions of citizenship and citizen engagement, which can contribute to more responsive states.
Access full text: available online

How can a citizen-centred approach to development build effective states by improving relations between state and society? This paper gives an overview of current debates and analyses citizens’ own views on these issues. It argues that a state’s legitimacy is strengthened by civic participation, which often grows up around local issues, and can be empowered through donor support.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3849
How can effective, accountable public authority be increased? This paper synthesises research findings from the Centre for the Future State. It explores how public authority is created through processes of bargaining between state and society actors, and the interaction of formal and informal institutions. Findings highlight the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing assumptions about governance and development. Informal institutions and personalised relationships are pervasive and powerful, but they can contribute to progressive as well as to regressive outcomes. Rather than focusing on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CON75.pdf


Additional resources

For discussion and resources on weak state-society relations as a characteristic of fragility, see Chapter 2 (Causes and characteristics of fragility) of the fragile states topic guide.

For discussion and resources on strengthening citizen engagement in statebuilding processes, see strategies for external engagement in Chapter 5 (Statebuilding in fragile contexts) of the fragile states guide.

For discussion and resources on political settlements, see:

- Inclusive political settlements and peace processes in the ‘Statebuilding and peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility’ supplement.
  http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/CON87.pdf

- Political Settlements in Chapter 5 of the fragile states guide

- Peace Agreements in Chapter 3 (Preventing and managing violent conflict) of the conflict guide

State legitimacy

State legitimacy is a key aspect of state-society relations. State repression and violence, which occurs in many conflict-affected contexts, results in negative experiences of citizens with the state, a legacy of mistrust, and rejection of the legitimacy of state institutions. In situations of fragility, the inability or unwillingness of states to provide for the welfare of citizens and to improve standards of living has also undermined trust between the state and society and legitimacy. The development of state capacity to manage competing interests and to be responsive to citizen’s needs thus has the potential to improve legitimacy.

State legitimacy can derive from a range of sources, including the effectiveness of public institutions in their performance of various functions, such as service delivery; and their degree of representation and accountability. Legitimacy does not derive solely from effectively functioning institutions, however. Such institutions must also resonate with societies in order for them to be
considered legitimate and to become embedded in society. This involves the penetration of the state into society such that citizens take the presence of the state and its rules for granted; they accept the state’s right to rule and its position as the highest political authority.

While international development actors can assist in developing state capacity such that they can be responsive to society, their ability to directly affect legitimacy is limited. State institutions advocated by external actors often correspond with Western state practices. These may not fit with local context and historical processes and may not be socially, politically or culturally appropriate. In such cases, the institutions are unlikely to be perceived as legitimate and to contribute to positive state-society relations.

Donors should invest more in understanding socio-political contexts, how local societies relate to the state and how historical and cultural factors shape public perceptions. They should seek to engage with communities and non-state institutions. This would contribute to an awareness of institutions that resonate with the population and the conditions in which state legitimacy is likely and unlikely to develop.

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State legitimacy provides the basis for rule by consent rather than coercion, but in fragile situations multiple, conflicting sources of legitimacy co-exist. How can the complex interactions between these different sources be better understood and constructively combined? Donors should pay particular attention to: (a) legitimacy deriving from shared beliefs and traditions; and (b) the processes of state-society interaction that nurture state capacity and legitimacy. Trying to strengthen state capacity and legitimacy in very fragile environments by supporting the creation of rational-legal political institutions will not work.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3855
What is state collapse and how should external actors address it? This essay reviews the literature, outlining the 'institutional' and 'legitimacy' approaches to the state and statebuilding that emerge. It argues that to be effective, statebuilding needs to consider both the efficiency of state institutions and their legitimacy, (and in terms of the latter, the impact of external intervention on socio-political cohesion, or 'nation-building'). Statebuilding and nation-building should thus be understood as a single process, in which local ownership and perceptions are vital.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3864
What is the potential for statebuilding interventions to foster domestic legitimacy? This article advocates a shift in current approaches to statebuilding. Rather than inserting modern institutions that create external legitimacy, statebuilding should focus on closing the gap between civil society and the state. More emphasis should be placed on building domestic legitimacy by fulfilling basic
welfare needs. This approach would stimulate local-level state legitimacy while formalising social justice and positive peacebuilding.

Access full text: available online

Additional resources

For further discussion and resources on state legitimacy, see Chapter 5 (Statebuilding in fragile contexts) of the fragile states topic guide.


Interaction between formal and informal institutions

While formal state institutions may be weak or deemed illegitimate in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, there are often informal institutions that persist and retain legitimacy. These institutions are diverse and may include community mechanisms or customary local governance institutions. Often, they fulfil some of the functions expected of the state.

Statebuilding initiatives have often focused primarily on formal institutions and their capacities at the central level, sidelining sub-state and informal institutions. This has prevented the evolution of an organic process of reform driven by local actors that could allow for greater resonance and legitimacy with citizens. There is a growing awareness of a need to pay attention to existing informal institutions. This may stem from pragmatic acceptance of their existence; a recognition that they represent local culture and practice; and/or the view that they can provide a bridge between state and society. Informal institutions may improve public service delivery; help stimulate investment; facilitate the transition to more inclusive, rules-based governance; and promote social reconciliation in situations of conflict.

In some cases, informal local governance institutions can work synergistically with formal institutions. In other cases, however, they may compete with formal institutions in negative ways and undermine them, particularly in the case of patronage networks. Critics view such informal institutions as undermining norms of governance and citizenship. Further, local and informal institutions may not necessarily function better than the state and can in some cases be discriminatory, particularly towards women and youth. Working with informal actors does not necessarily mean endorsement though if donors can engage in dialogue with them with a view to securing inclusive rights. The key to adopting an institutionally diverse approach in statebuilding and peacebuilding processes is to avoid competition between informal and formal state institutions. It is important to understand the conditions in which they can be beneficially linked.


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How can effective, accountable public authority be increased? This paper synthesises research findings from the Centre for the Future State. It explores how public authority is created through processes of bargaining between state and society actors, and the interaction of formal and informal institutions. Findings highlight the need for a fundamental reassessment of existing assumptions about governance and development. Informal institutions and personalised relationships are
pervasive and powerful, but they can contribute to progressive as well as to regressive outcomes. Rather than focusing on rules-based reform, policymakers should consider using indirect strategies to influence local actors.

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http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3871
What can an analysis of ‘space’ in post-conflict situations tell us about existing theoretical approaches to statebuilding and peacebuilding? This article argues that post-conflict spaces have to be understood as fields of power where sovereignty is constantly contested and negotiated among global, elite and local actors. Understanding these spaces means breaking out of the dominant liberal peace model and ‘single sovereign’ framework. It requires recognition of the resilience of local space and importance of elite-subordinate dynamics of patronage and informal structures of authority. This makes it possible to discern some of the logics that govern how power and space shape each other in post-conflict settings.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3909
How can the international community help national reformers to build effective, legitimate and resilient states in post-conflict settings? This chapter discusses the complex intangible dimensions of state-building – state-society relations and negotiation processes. It argues that building the capacity of formal institutions needs to be complemented by actions that take into account the roles of perceptions and expectations, of bottom-up consultations and of the degree to which populations feel represented by public institutions. It recommends a gradual, long-term and socio-culturally engaged approach to state-building, which external actors may support but not lead.
Access full text: available online


Additional resources

For further discussion and resources on non-state actors, see:

- **Working within local contexts and institutions** in Chapter 5 (Statebuilding in fragile contexts) of the fragile states topic guide.

- **Non-state actors and peacebuilding** in Chapter 4 (Recovering from violent conflict) of the conflict guide.
Statelessness

‘Statelessness’, in a strictly legal sense, refers to individuals or groups who are not considered nationals by any state. Such persons have few rights in a state-driven international system. Individuals and groups may become stateless through forced migration, during periods of violent conflict and/or political transition. Their statelessness may persist from the absence of rule of law in weak states with poor governance. Citizens can also lose citizenship through revocation or withdrawal. This can stem from exclusive nationalist ideologies during periods of political unrest and can be used as a tool of war.

Statelessness can also result from the denial of ‘effective’ exercise of citizenship rights even where individuals and groups hold legal citizenship. Discrimination against specific minority groups through exclusionary state rules, norms and practices can deny them from accessing their rights. Ethnic identity or gender, for example, rather than citizenship identity, can determine access to state entitlements and social rights.

The irregular distribution of citizenship and the failure of the state to represent the interests of all citizens is likely to impact upon societal stability and the probability of conflict. Denial of citizenship and exclusion deprives the stateless and marginalised from key goods and may result in lack of trust in state institutions. It may also result in a sense of humiliation and alienation that can transform into group mobilisation and fuel violent conflict.

Sub-state level institutions can also be exclusionary. In some cases, citizenship may be inclusive at the national level while local-level governance may remain exclusive – resulting in a multi-tiered citizenship structure. In many African countries, for example, women have little contact with the formal state and are constrained in their exercise of citizenship rights. Many aspects of their lives are governed instead by local, customary systems that often limit their rights. They are unable to hold the state accountable in these areas.

Statebuilding and peacebuilding processes in situations of conflict and fragility can allow for changes in power relations, state structures and institutions, and the relationship between the state and citizens. In order to achieve peace and stability, it is important to ensure that specific groups are not deliberately and unfairly excluded from citizenship or from exercising their right to citizenship. It is necessary to understand and address not only the mechanisms that create statelessness but also those that perpetuate deprivation. In the shorter to medium-term, donors need to ensure that stateless groups are not neglected in assistance programmes.

Statelessness undermines the promotion of human security understood not only as violent threats to individuals but also in the context of vulnerabilities caused by poverty, lack of state capacity and various forms of inequity. Yet, statelessness and the value or acquiring or re-acquiring citizenship has received minimal attention from scholars, development agencies and monitoring bodies. This book presents research on the benefits of citizenship as a means of countering human rights violations and social, economic and political instability. It stresses that if stateless groups are not given particular attention by donors in social assistance programmes and if issues of citizenship are not addressed, it is unlikely that aid policies will reach them.

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Post-independence political crises in Africa have shown a similar pattern; leaders seek to buttress their support among one part of their country’s population by excluding another from the right to belong to the country. This publication argues that the denial of a right to citizenship has been at the heart of many of the conflicts of post-colonial Africa, and examines the ways in which citizenship is denied. While adopting new laws is only a first step towards overcoming past and present injustice, legal citizenship reforms, in South Africa in particular, point the way toward redefining national citizenship and moving beyond these crises.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3844
How central has the issue of citizenship and rights been to internal conflicts in Africa? This article moves away from political and economic explanations of conflict and argues that underlying most of the civil wars in Africa are issues of citizenship and rights. Often the state institutionalises ethnic differences and privileges through a divided and exclusionary definition of citizenship. Negotiating peace and stability will require reframing citizenship from a group to a national or ‘universal’ perspective.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3185
How can women’s citizenship in developing countries be strengthened? In many African countries women have little contact with the formal state and their lives are governed by customary governance systems that seriously limit their rights and opportunities for political participation. This is particularly true for women in fragile states, where the formal state is weak and inaccessible. Based on field research in Sierra Leone, this paper examines how processes of post-conflict statebuilding have redrawn the boundaries of authority between the formal state and customary governance systems, and thereby provided new citizenship opportunities for women. The paper explores the changes that are taking place in women’s rights, women’s political participation and women’s mobilisation in Sierra Leone, in the context of statebuilding. It also makes recommendations on how donors can support the strengthening of women’s citizenship within their support for statebuilding in Africa.
Access full text: available online
Case studies


The project, 'Citizenship and Displacement in the Great Lakes Region', run by the The International Refugee Rights Initiative in partnership with Rema Ministries and the Social Science Research Council, has published a series of case studies on citizenship and belonging in the Great Lakes region and forced displacement.


Hovil, Lucy et al., 2009, ““Two People Can’t Share the Same Pair of Shoes”: Citizenship, Land and the Return of Refugees to Burundi’, Working Paper, no. 2


http://www.refugee-rights.org/Assets/PDFs/10_06_28_DangerousImpasse.pdf

Additional resources

For discussion and resources on social exclusion and inclusiveness, see:

- Exclusion, rights and citizenship in the social exclusion topic guide.

- Inequality, exclusion and marginalisation in Chapter 1 (Understanding violent conflict) in the conflict topic guide.

- Social exclusion and horizontal inequalities in Chapter 2 (Causes and characteristics of fragility) in the fragile states topic guide.
- **Social capital, social cohesion and inclusiveness** in Chapter 4 (Recovering from violent conflict) in the conflict topic guide. 

- **Inclusive political settlements and peace processes** in the ‘Statebuilding and peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility’ supplement 
Civic Trust and Socio-Political Cohesion

Social and political fragmentation and weak civic and inter-group trust are often characteristics of situations of fragility and violent conflict. Such divisions can contribute to and be an outcome of fragility and conflict. In situations of fragility, political identity, fragmentation and weak state institutions reinforce each other. They undermine state legitimacy and the formation of strong nation-wide governance systems; weaken interpersonal trust; and divide citizens. In situations of violent conflict, processes of ‘othering’ and dehumanisation destroy social relations and networks and leave a legacy of deep mistrust and fear of others. Persistent divisions in the aftermath of conflict result in an unstable peace and the possibility of renewed violence.

Weak social cohesion and distrust also impact negatively on perceptions of political community and on civic action. People are reluctant to engage with the ‘other’, hindering the development of civic engagement and collective action. In addition, fear and insecurity and feelings of powerlessness and marginalisation from conflict can also weaken a sense of individual civic agency. Where the state is involved in violence and repression, such sentiments can be more pronounced.

In addition to withdrawing from citizenship, citizens may also respond to or cope with violence by establishing parallel governance or security structures. These can further weaken the legitimacy of state institutions and exacerbate inter-group divisions where such parallel structures cater solely to specific groups.

It is important for statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts to take into account and to understand the role of state weakness and state and private violence in limiting civic agency and undermining socio-political cohesion. Efforts are needed to ensure that citizens can relate to each other in civil or non-violent ways and to foster a national identity that transcends divisions.

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What role does identity play in determining a state’s robustness? This article argues that the relationship between identities, institutions, social cohesion and state legitimacy is critical to understanding social and political progress in fragile states. States that lack a common identity will fail to progress. International actors should support fragile states to develop their own development and state-building strategies, and build on their own capacities for good governance.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3257
Can civil society organisations play a role in building citizenship and confronting violent actors and acts of violence? This paper argues that they can, and explores civil society participation in Colombia and Guatemala. Building citizenship in chronic violence contexts requires simultaneous attention to citizenship and to violence, and it is also important to clarify the relationship between power and violence.
Access full text: available online
Intra-society relations

When violence and fragility destroy ‘social fabrics’, it is essential to understand how people can begin to interact again and how inter-group relationships can recover. This is also critical for the prevention of violent conflict and fragility. Developing institutions that can mitigate inter-group conflict by focusing on individual protections and peaceful resolution of conflict are important but insufficient areas of reform. The persistence of intense divisions and hostilities can prevent these institutions from functioning properly. Efforts to transform hostile relationships into more positive and constructive ones (often referred to as coexistence and ‘reconciliation’) are long term processes that require specific attention. They should be integrated into political, economic and other dimensions of peacebuilding and statebuilding. Actions and processes must be designed to break down, rather than reinforce, the dynamics of inter-group hostilities and divisions. This often entails the promotion of multiple identities instead of a narrow focus on one salient feature prominent during conflict.

In many situations of violent conflict, there was a history of coexistence. This indicates that identities were created and politicized rather than inherent; and that relationships can be transformed. Transformation requires sustained interactions across divides, rehumanisation of the ‘other’, and the renewal of trust and cooperation across groups. Various strategies have been adopted, including dialogue and inter-group exchange, problem-solving workshops, working together to achieve shared goals, peace education, artistic performances, and media campaigns designed to reframe the ‘other’. These should take place alongside efforts to combat exclusion and to ensure inclusive access to and participation in political, economic and social opportunities and benefits.
Initiatives to promote coexistence and reconciliation processes can be undertaken by a variety of institutions and actors – local, national, international, at all levels of society. They include religious, business, and political leaders; artists and media personalities; local and international NGOs and donors. Although interventions in post-conflict and fragile environments often focus on reconstructing or aiding the government, many coexistence and reconciliation activities come not from the ‘centre’, but from the ‘periphery’ of societies. The participation of civil society organisations, for example, can broaden spaces for interaction without violence, connect people and restore plurality. It is important to support initiatives at the periphery, while addressing structural changes at the centre.

It is also critical to recognize, however, that civil society actors may not necessarily be dedicated to reconciliation and peace processes. Civil society groups may be linked with political groups, and there have been cases where academics, media, diaspora groups and religious leaders have contributed instead to violent conflict. Development actors should consider the composition of civil society in their support to the periphery.

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3869

How can peacebuilding be effective in contexts with a legacy of ethnic wars, ethnic hostilities, and ethnic intolerance? This study argues that ‘reconciliation’ must be incorporated into peacebuilding efforts in order to achieve post-conflict development in ethnically divided societies and advocates a 'Peacebuilding through Reconciliation' approach. It views reconciliation as the transformation of relationships. This involves creating alliances for the benefit of the common good; and appealing to individual and group rationality to overcome destructive emotions for the sake of development. Whether peacebuilding is taking place at political, economic, social or infrastructural levels, it is important that peacebuilding processes are designed to break down, rather than reinforce, the dynamics of ethnic hostilities and ethnic intolerance.

Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3870

How can inter-communal relations be transformed after violent interethnic conflict? How are coexistence and reconciliation related? This chapter discusses the two concepts; obstacles to achieving them; and methods for achieving equitable coexistence and reconciliation. While divisions can be deeply entrenched in contexts of communal violence, coexistence can be fostered by promoting equitable relationships, creating the conditions for inter-communal interaction and facilitating interpersonal healing.

Access full text: available online


Access full text: available online
Additional resources

For discussion and resources on **reconciliation, social renewal and inclusiveness** (including on traditional approaches, social capital and social cohesion, coexistence programming and peace education), see Chapter 4 (Recovering from violent conflict) of the conflict topic guide.  

For discussion and resources on civil society and peacebuilding, see **non-state actors and peacebuilding** in Chapter 4 of the conflict topic guide.  

Civic trust and citizenship

Efforts to promote coexistence and inter-group reconciliation processes have generally been more prominent in peacebuilding. They are equally important in statebuilding; trust is necessary for political and economic development as it facilitates cooperation. Trust and confidence are necessary not only at interpersonal and inter-group levels, but in terms of shared norms and values and trust in the state and its institutions (‘civic trust’). In this view, reconciliation is the condition under which citizens can once again trust one another as citizens; and trust that the ‘other’ will abide by the norms and institutions of society.

Distrust of the ‘other’ and internalised feelings of powerlessness, prevalent in situations of conflict and fragility, is a constraint on collective action. Initiatives designed to facilitate civic action can be aimed not only at restoring societal relationships but at developing active citizenship. Bringing individuals together across divides to discuss shared problems can help to re-establish social relations and networks, promote a collective awareness of prevailing problems and uncover possibilities for collective action.

Such cross-cutting activities and cooperation, often facilitated through local associations and by non-governmental organisations, are considered effective and legitimate means of restoring trust. Associational life and other examples of social organisation often survive and persist in situations of conflict and fragility and can be drawn upon. Improvements in daily life through participation in local activities can strengthen people’s understanding of agency and prepare them for opportunities of engagement with state institutions.

It is important to recognise, however, that civic engagement may not be equitable. It involves power relations among citizens, between citizens and the state and other powerful actors, and between varying state levels. Efforts should be made to determine whose voices are heard and to foster inclusive, effective participation.

To date, there have been limited efforts to link coexistence and reconciliation activities and local development initiatives to citizenship. It is important for actors in these areas to consider in which situations they can link their peacebuilding activities to citizenship building. Support to conflict-affected and fragile settings should extend to fostering awareness of citizenship and agency, referring to citizens as members of a wider socio-political community. Strategies and projects that
increase a population’s sense of shared interests, mutual obligations and common aspects of identity should be prioritised.

Oosterom, M., 2009, ‘Fragility at the Local Level: Challenges to Building Local State – Citizen Relations in Fragile Settings’, Working paper prepared for ‘Local Governance in Fragile Settings: Strengthening Local Governments, Civic Action or Both?’ workshop, 24 November, the Hague
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3860
How does state fragility affect citizen-state relations at the local level? How can development agencies seek to promote citizen participation? This paper outlines the key issues and challenges in building local citizen-state relations in fragile settings. It argues that strengthening citizen voice and agency through support for local civil society institutions is just as important as building the capacity of the state to respond to citizens' needs. Development agencies should focus more on ‘citizenship-building’ in fragile settings and on fostering a sense of socio-political community.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3903
Crucial social and cultural elements underpin state institutions and ensure that they function. This is especially important to understand in 'fragile' settings. This paper argues that conventional perspectives need to be broadened beyond tangible dimensions of state resilience, institutions and statebuilding to include intangible dimensions. International actors need to gain an understanding of the relationships, structures and belief systems that underpin institutions, and of the multiplicity and diversity of political institutions, cultures, and logics through which statebuilding processes may be supported.
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http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3863
How does citizen engagement contribute to responsive governance? This paper summarises ten years of research from the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability, presenting the key findings of more than 150 case studies of citizen engagement. It argues that existing donor programmes fail to recognise the full potential of citizen engagement, resulting in lack of understanding of the complex relationship between citizens and the state that shapes governance outcomes. Citizens need greater political knowledge and awareness of rights and of agency as a first step to claiming rights and acting for themselves. Involvement in associations has been an effective way of strengthening notions of citizenship and citizen engagement, which can contribute to more responsive states.
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Additional resources


Socio-political cohesion and nationhood

Unifying disparate peoples at national and local levels and promoting cohesion in conflict-affected and fragile states are important intangible aspects of statebuilding and peacebuilding. A legitimate political order needs to be based on some agreement about the boundaries of the political community, national priorities and collective identity. In addition, a shared over-arching identity can focus attention away from ethnic and sectarian identities that may have become the source of divisions in violent conflict. This leads to ideas of nationhood. A ‘nation’ implies a shared sense of political community and elements of identity. Nation-building as defined by DFID is ‘the construction of a shared sense of identity and common destiny, to overcome ethnic, sectarian or religious differences and counter alternative allegiances’ (DFID, 2010, p. 18).

Citizenship and nationality cannot be conflated. In some cases, citizenship may be conferred based on belonging to a particular ethnic group, or may be effectively exercised only by dominant groups (see ‘statelessness’ section). Thus, nationals of a country may still be denied citizenship and rendered stateless. In other cases, nationality is defined solely in ethnic terms, whereas citizenship is seen as broader, encompassing various ethnic groups living within a country.

Statebuilding and peacebuilding may enable nation-building but do not necessarily guarantee it. Effective state institutions may not result in a sense of nationhood; and a sense of nationhood may not improve the likelihood of strong institutions. There is a growing body of literature that argues, however, that the line between statebuilding and nation-building is not clear-cut. State structures permeate through to societal structures and statebuilding processes affect socio-political cohesion.

Constitution drafting and elections, state policies on language and educational systems, for example, can have a profound impact on nationhood. They address and shape fundamental questions related to nationality, citizenship, identities, trust and values. They also impact on the degree to which a state is politically inclusive. Participatory and inclusive deliberation in constitution drafting can provide a forum and process to bring divided groups together to negotiate controversial issues and to think about a common vision of the state. A constitution serves as a symbol that disparate groups have agreed to live together.

It is thus important for external actors to address the reality that statebuilding can bring them into the realm of nation-building, instead of avoiding it. Trying to build institutions without linking them to shared values and inclusive notions of citizenship and political community can result in the persistence of divisions. Perceptions of nationhood and state legitimacy are fostered through a sense of belonging and connection to the state and to wider society. In addition to attention to inclusive institutions, this can be fostered through educational, cultural and sports programmes.
It is also important to recognize that nation-building is a long-term indigenous process and that, similar to issues of legitimacy, there is a limit to which external actors can play an active role. In many cases, legitimacy and nationhood require that central institutions engage with local, community and customary governance. This can give people a stronger connection to the state and a greater sense of belonging.

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3855
What is state collapse and how should external actors address it? This essay reviews the literature, outlining the 'institutional' and 'legitimacy' approaches to the state and statebuilding that emerge. It argues that to be effective, statebuilding needs to consider both the efficiency of state institutions and their legitimacy, (and in terms of the latter, the impact of external intervention on socio-political cohesion, or 'nation-building'). Statebuilding and nation-building should thus be understood as a single process, in which local ownership and perceptions are vital.
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http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3846
State-building has been seen as the path to both security and development in East Timor. However, this article argues that this approach neglects situating key government institutions within a social context. There has been little effort on the part of central institutions to engage with local, community and customary governance. A nation-building agenda needs to support the emergence of networks of communication and exchange between government, social institutions and people and between different levels and kinds of governance. Building deep connections between different forms of governance, and so grounding government in communities, is slow and difficult, yet essential.
Access full text: available online

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3887
Today, conflicts or potential conflicts are estimated to exist in around seventy societies across the world. How can the international community best help these societies build peace? How are concepts of peacebuilding, statebuilding and nationbuilding distinct? This paper exposes the problems and contradictions of neo-Wilsonian approaches to peacebuilding. It argues that there is a need for a theoretically informed understanding of the goals and limits of international intervention as well as country-specific knowledge to ensure that interventions support peacebuilding processes effectively. It also argues for the need to distinguish between concepts of peacebuilding, statebuilding and nationbuilding.
Access full text: available online
How can sustainable peace be built in fragile states? This study shows that while donors have largely focused on statebuilding, stability requires a deeper process of nation-building. External actors are restricted to using statebuilding as a means of enabling nation-building. They can assist in the establishment of rule of law, create a fertile investment climate for economic regeneration and agree an exit strategy. However, only the partner country can take the lead role in nation-building.

Access full text: available online


Why has the number of ‘failed' states increased in spite of international intervention? This paper argues that this is in part attributable to the neglect of ‘nation-building’. The social and cognitive processes of creating a common national identity during post-conflict reconstruction are paramount. Capacity-building and institutional reforms are important activities. However it is the ability of people, and mainly elites, to use such structures to construct a 'nation' that prevents a state from collapsing.

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What role does constitution-building play in post-war statebuilding? This chapter looks at the political dynamics, choices and implementation challenges that confront constitution-building. It suggests that the process can provide a key opportunity to shape the institutional and governance framework, and opens the door to societal dialogue. However, ensuring that such a process supports the establishment of a peaceful and legitimate state requires careful balancing of the compromises needed to maintain the peace and the people's involvement in deciding the future of their country.

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Additional resources

For discussion and resources on inclusive political settlements and peace processes, see the supplement, ‘Statebuilding and peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility’

For discussion and resources on power-sharing, see peace agreements in Chapter 4 (Recovering from violent conflict) of the conflict topic guide.

For discussion and resources on state legitimacy and non-state institutions, see the ‘state-society relations’ section of this supplement.
For discussion and resources on cultural heritage preservation in conflict contexts, see Chapter 4 of the conflict guide:

- **Cultural preservation** in the stabilisation section

- **Cultural heritage** in the socioeconomic recovery section